



Appropriations Committee, February 2017
Testimony Regarding Judicial Branch Budget

H.B. No. 7027 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH 2019, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR.

Good afternoon Chairman Walker, Chairman Osten, Chairman Formica and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Ron Nelson. I am vice president of AFSCME Local 749 which represents workers in the Judicial Branch's Court Support Services Division. I serve as a juvenile detention officer.

We urge you to provide staffing, funding and additional training for staff in CSSD. CSSD serves the bulk of youth who are adjudicated – better than 90 percent. Many of the children in our charge have profound problems. Among the youth that we serve are those who are suicidal, violence prone, sexually reactive, chronic runaways and arson prone. These are the youths that nonprofits will not be able to serve, despite their best intentions.

State budget cuts have hurt our ability to serve the adjudicated youth in our care. We need more staff. Last year's layoffs profoundly undercut staffing. This has caused a big increase in overtime. This has also led to staff exhaustion. Exhaustion can lead to more stress and increased workers comp from work related injuries. Hiring more and proper staff would save money for the state. For instance, Bridgeport detention center hasn't had full coverage shift supervisors since January of 2016.

We are proud of the work that we do. I am honored to serve my colleagues who amaze me every day with the care and concern that they show the youth in our charge. We want to do the best job that we possibly can in caring for, teaching and rehabilitating the young people that we deal with. However this does take a greater commitment on the part of state policy makers. I would be happy to meet with any of you or take you on a tour of any of our juvenile detention centers. Our juvenile detention centers are nationally recognized as excellent. We are dually accredited by the American Correctional Association and the National Commission on Correctional Health Care. We are among the only juvenile detention centers in the country to be so highly accredited.

Thank you for your consideration.